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VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT

‘Modern’ Organ Style in Karl Straube’s Reger Editions

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad Doctor aan
de Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam,
op gezag van de rector magnificus
prof.dr. L.M. Bouter,
in het openbaar te verdedigen
ten overstaan van de promotiecommissie
van de faculteit der Letteren
op vrijdag 23 november 2007 om 10.45 uur
in de aula van de universiteit,
De Boelelaan 1105

door

David William Adams

geboren te Dublin, Ierland

promotor: prof. dr. E. Kooiman
copromotor: prof. dr. H.J. Busch

for Mary

A man that looks on glasse
On it may stay his eye;
Or if he pleaseth, through it passe,
And then the heav'n espie. (*George Herbert*)

The art of performance only *begins* when the player learns to read 'between the lines',
when the 'unspoken' comes to light. (*Max Reger*)

Contents

Chapter Subdivisions		vi
List of Tables		xi
Abbreviations		xii
Preface		xiii
Acknowledgements		xiv
Chapter 1	Max Reger and Karl Straube: Straube's Reger Editions	1
Chapter 2	The Walze	7
Chapter 3	The Swell	41
Chapter 4	Sound and Registration	71
Chapter 5	Touch, Texture and Tempo	107
Chapter 6	The Survival of 'Modern' Organ Style: Straube and Reger Performance in the 1930s and 1940s	147
Chapter 7	Idealism and Resignation	169
Appendix 1	Chronology	187
Appendix 2	Organ Dispositions	190
Appendix 3	Early Performances of Max Reger's Organ Music	196
Appendix 4	Reger's Organ Works Listed	204
Appendix 5	An extract from Reger's original and Straube's 1912 edition of <i>Kyrie</i> , op. 59/7	206
Bibliography		210
Samenvatting		219

Chapter Subdivisions

Chapter 1 MAX REGER AND KARL STRAUBE: STRAUBE'S REGER EDITIONS

1	Max Reger and Karl Straube: A musical partnership	1
2	Leipzig: Home to Reger, Straube and the publishing house C.F. Peters	2
3	Publications on the Straube editions	5
4	'Practical' editions or the codification of 'modern' organ style	6

Chapter 2 THE WALZE

1.1	Inherent lack of dynamic flexibility in organ sound	7
1.2	Attempts to remedy the situation	7
2.1	The Walze	8
2.2	Reger and the Walze	10
2.3	Reger and the organs of Wilhelm Sauer	11
2.4	The 'staged' Walze	11
2.5	The 'staged' Walze and the organs of Wilhelm Sauer	12
2.6	Criticism of the Walze	13
3.1	Straube and the Walze	14
3.2	Walze indications in Straube's editions	15
3.3	'Base' registrations	17
3.4	'Base' registrations in combination with Walze	20
3.5	Speculative reconstruction of the Walze in the <i>Thomaskirche</i> in Leipzig	21
3.6	The two categories of base registrations in Straube's editions	23
3.7	An example of Straube's use of the Walze from Reger's op. 65/12	26
3.8	The gradual operation of the Walze over long stretches	26
3.9	The staggering of 'gradual' crescendos and decrescendos	27
3.10	The Walze staggered according to the freedom of the right foot	28
3.11	The Walze in difficult pedal passages	28
3.12	The operation of the Walze by an assistant	29
3.13	The Pedal Walze	30
3.14	The 'abrupt' use of Walze within gradual dynamic alterations	30
3.15	Parallel passages registered differently as a result of Walze use	32
3.16	The Walze and pliancy of sound	32
3.17	Terraced dynamics realised by the Walze	33
3.18	The presetting and resetting of the Walze, and the alternation of the Walze with the <i>Handregistrierung</i> and free combinations	34
3.19	The avoidance of predictability in Straube's handling of the Walze	34
3.20	The frequent avoidance in Straube's editions of full organ, and the scaling down of Reger's dynamic indications	35
3.21	The bridging of foundation stops and <i>plenum</i> area	36
3.22	The Walze and the Swell	37
3.23	The relative nature of dynamic markings in Straube's editions	37

3.24	Criticisms of the Walze answered by Straube's Reger editions	39
3.25	Conclusion	39

Chapter 3 THE SWELL

1	Introduction	41
1.1	The status of the Swell in nineteenth-century Germany	41
1.2	The 'primitive' operation of the Swell	42
2	German forms of the Swell	43
2.1	Slight Swells and <i>Fernwerke</i>	43
2.2	Powerful Swells	44
3	Reger and the Swell	47
3.1	Before 1901	47
3.2	1901 and after	49
3.3	Reger's indications for the use of Swell	51
4	Straube and the Swell	54
4.1	Organs in Berlin and Wesel	54
4.2	The organ of the <i>Thomaskirche</i> in Leipzig	55
4.3	Straube's Reger editions and the Swell	56
4.4	The partial exploitation of the Swell	57
4.5	The coupled-through system	58
4.6	Registrations with a numerical bias in favour of the Swell manual	59
4.7	The colouristic use of the Swell	62
4.8	The value of strings as Swell stops	62
4.9	The increased use of the Swell in Straube's editions	65
4.10	The occasional reduction in the use of Swell	66
4.11	The later placing of hairpins in Straube's editions	66
4.12	The rhetorical reinterpretation of melodic lines as a result of additional and/or displaced haripins	67
4.13	The omission of Reger's indication ' <i>molto</i> ' between hairpins	67
4.14	The closing of the Swell before changes of manual in crescendo fugues	68
4.15	Conclusions	69

Chapter 4 SOUND AND REGISTRATION

1	Wagner and the organ	71
1.1	The Wagnerian 'shadow'	71
1.2	The Wagnerisation of Bach	73
1.3	The imposition of a 'modern' organ style on Reger's music	74
2	Straube's registration practice	75
2.1	The rejection of 'accidental' sound in organ registration	75
2.2	Colour	76
2.3	Straube's <i>Farbenakkord</i>	80

3	Blended Sound	82
3.1	Organ registration and orchestral texture	82
3.2	Wagner's assimilation of organ sound	84
3.3	Blend in organ building	85
3.4	Qualities of blend in Sauer organs	87
3.5	Blend as an essentially German preference in organ sound	88
3.6	Straube's blended registrations	89
3.7	8' registrations	92
3.8	Extreme bias towards fundamental sound avoided by Straube	93
3.9	8' and 4' registrations	95
4	Density in organ sound	96
4.1	Mixtures	96
4.2	Fullness of texture and 'gapped' registrations	99
4.3	'Covered' and indirect sound	100
5	Conclusion	103

Chapter 5 TOUCH, TEXTURE AND TEMPO

1	Introduction	107
1.1	Notational ambiguity and interpretative uncertainty	107
1.2	What is legato?	108
1.3	The pre-eminence of legato in nineteenth-century organ playing	108
1.4	Harmonic comprehensibility	109
1.5	Piano and organ	110
1.6	Non-legato touch	111
2	Reger and touch	111
2.1	Reger's endorsement of legato organ style and his use of the term <i>legatissimo</i>	111
2.2	Technical difficulties	112
2.3	Reger's rejection of gratuitous phrasing indications	113
2.4	Slurring as an analytical tool	113
2.5	Development in Reger's notation of phrasing and articulation	115
2.6	Highlighting: Accents, <i>tenuto</i> dashes and <i>marcato</i>	119
3	Straube and touch	120
3.1	The problematic nature of Straube's phrasing and articulation indications in performance	120
3.2	Straube and legato	121
3.3	Over-legato and sliding between manuals	122
3.4	The perception of Straube as innovator	123
3.5	The five 'touches'	124
3.6	The completion of a phrasing system in Reger's scores	124
3.7	Indications of phrasing and articulation in Straube's Reger editions as multi-functional aids to performance	125
3.8	Reinterpretation	127
4	Texture	127
4.1	The textural significance of the inner voices	127
4.2	<i>Marcato</i>	130

5	Conclusions	130
5.1	Fischer, Straube and Reger	130
5.2	Levels of phrasing	131
5.3	The function of phrasing and articulation	132
5.4	A post-Wagnerian attitude to texture	133
5.5	Upbeat phrasing	134
5.6	Staggered phrasing	135
5.7	The value of Straube's phrasing and articulation	136
6	Tempo, and the modification of tempo	137
6.1	Tempo modification as an important aspect of Wagnerian performance practice	137
6.2	Reger and rhythmic freedom	138
6.3	Structural and melodic rubato, and the non-alignment of parts	140
6.4	Straube and tempo modification	141
6.5	Reduction in tempo	142
6.6	Summary	144
Chapter 6	THE SURVIVAL OF 'MODERN' ORGAN STYLE: STRAUBE AND REGER PERFORMANCE IN THE 1930S AND 1940s	
1	Straube's 1938 edition of Reger's <i>Phantasie für Orgel über den Choral 'Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott' op. 27: A 'modern' work in classical garb?</i>	147
1.1	The Preface to Straube's op. 27 edition	147
1.2	The timing of the edition	148
1.3	The organs associated with Straube's op. 27 edition	149
1.3.1	Basel	149
1.3.2	Leipzig	151
1.4	How 'modern' is Reger's op. 27?	152
1.4.1	Textural considerations	152
1.4.2	Straube's own judgement	152
1.4.3	Transitional dynamics in op. 27?	153
1.4.4	Straube's edition at variance with the wording of its preface	155
1.5	The status of the new edition	156
1.6	Summary: incongruity in the op. 27 edition, and ambiguity in its preface	158
2	Reger's <i>Symphonische Phantasie und Fuge, op.57</i>, as taught by Straube in 1940/41	161
2.1	Heinz Wunderlich's 1973 article on Straube's teaching of Reger's op. 57	161
2.2	Part I of Wunderlich's article	162
2.3	Part II of Wunderlich's article	163
2.4	Conclusions	166

Chapter 7 IDEALISM AND RESIGNATION

1	‘Modern’ organ style in the face of German conservatism	169
2	The mission to re-establish the pre-eminence of German organ culture	171
3	Duality as a problematic key to Reger performance	173
4	Latitude in the treatment of Reger’s performance indications	175
5	Karl Straube’s contribution	178
6	Straube and the transitional style	179
7	Epilogue: Resignation as a law of life	181

List of Tables

1.1	Straube's Reger editions of 1912 and 1919 – List of Movements	4
2.1	Base registrations (registrations used in conjunction with the Walze)	18
2.2	Speculative reconstruction of the Walze in the Thomaskirche	22
2.3	Numbers of bars over which the gradual employment of the Walze is indicated in the 1912 and 1919 editions	27
2.4	The use of Walze in difficult pedal passages	29
2.5	The relationship in Straube's scores between dynamic levels and stops drawn	38
3.1	The Swell of the Wiesbaden Marktkirche (Walcker 1857-1862)	48
3.2	The Swell of the Kaimsaal in Munich (Walcker 1896)	49
3.3	The Swell of the Schützenhaus in Meiningen (Steinmeyer 1913)	50
3.4	Numerical distribution of stops over the manuals in Straube's registrations	60
3.5	The inclusion of the Voix céleste in Straube's registrations	64
4.1	Straube's manual registrations for the opening of the Präludium, op. 85/2	79
4.2	Resources in the soft 8' range of the Thomaskirche organ (excluding Doppelflöte, Schalmey and Voix céleste)	92
4.3	The soft 4' stops of the Thomaskirche organ	96
4.4	Pitches of stops in Straube's registration for 2. Komb., op. 59/5	101
5.1	Flexible tempos in Straube's Reger editions	141
6.1	The Münster in Basel (Haas 1855): stops listed by pitch	151

Abbreviations

<i>HR</i>	= <i>Handregistrierung</i> , stops drawn by hand as distinct from those drawn in combinations or by the Walze
1K	= 1. <i>Komb.</i> (Combination 1), 2K = 2. <i>Komb.</i> , 3K = 3. <i>Komb.</i>
KS	= <i>Karl Straube zu seinem 70. Geburtstag. Gaben der Freunde</i> (Leipzig undated, for Straube's 70 th birthday on 6.1.1943)
KSB	= <i>Karl Straube: Briefe eines Thomaskantors</i> (Stuttgart 1952)
MMRG	= <i>Mitteilungen der Max-Reger-Gesellschaft</i> (Stuttgart 1921-1928, Leipzig 1932-1941)
MMRI	= <i>Mitteilungen des Max-Reger-Instituts</i> , 1-20 Vols. (Wiesbaden 1954-1974)
MRB	= <i>Max Reger: Briefe eines deutschen Meisters</i> , ed. Else von Hase-Koehler (Leipzig 1928)
MuK	= <i>Musik und Kirche</i> , Kassel 1929 ff.
NZfM	= <i>Neue Zeitschrift für Musik</i>
X	= Mixture stops, when stops are listed by pitch only
ZfM	= <i>Zeitschrift für Musik</i>

Preface

In his seminal *Deutsche und Französische Orgelbaukunst und Orgelkunst* (1906) Albert Schweitzer wrote that ‘the artistic essence of an organ...is defined by the manner in which one proceeds...from *piano*...to *fortissimo* and back again’.¹ A significant part of this study is concerned with the mechanics of dynamic change on the organ, particularly Karl Straube’s treatment of the Swell and the Walze in his 1912 and 1919 editions of organ works by Max Reger.

‘Modern’ (late-Romantic) organ style as codified by Straube in these editions, however, is much more than a mere realisation of the dynamics in Reger’s scores. It is a systematic and unique presentation of post-Wagnerian performance practice on the organ. It covers all aspects of performance, including dynamics, phrasing, touch, texture, registration, tempo and the modification of tempo. In Chapters two to five this study attempts to place the treatment of these parameters both in the immediate context of Reger’s personal experience, and in the wider context of turn-of-the-century Germany.

With at least the nominal agreement of the composer for the 1912 edition,² Straube imposed a personal system of performance on Reger’s organ music, derived from ‘modern’ mainstream musical practice and from his own experience as a performer – practical, musical and aesthetic.

Due to external forces (principally World War I and the organ reform movements that resulted in changing attitudes in organ performance and building) the full flowering of ‘modern’ organ style was short-lived, and Straube’s Reger editions have received scant attention from player and scholar alike. In his later years Straube himself appears to have been somewhat embarrassed by the ‘modern’ organ and its playing techniques with which he was associated throughout his long career (see Chapters six and seven). However, Straube’s ambiguous stance in relation to the survival of ‘modern’ organ style implies a level of regret at its demise that is explored in Chapter six.

By means of an examination of these editions this study hopes to rekindle an interest in Post-Wagnerian performance practice as a contemporaneous approach to Max Reger’s organ works.

¹ Schweitzer 3. ‘Das künstlerische Wesen einer Orgel, und noch viel mehr das ganze Wesen der Orgelmusik, wird bestimmt durch die Art, wie man auf diesem Instrument vom Piano zum Forte, vom Forte zum Fortissimo gelangt und vom letzterem wieder in die Anfangsklangfarbe zurückkehrt.’

² Straube’s 1912 Reger edition is headed ‘with the agreement of the composer’ [‘im Einverständnis mit dem Komponisten’]. As Reger died in 1916 it can only be assumed that he would have had no objection to the publication of a further set of his organ pieces edited by Straube in 1919. Friedrich Högner, in fact, did claim that this edition was published with the express permission of Reger (in Högner C 305 ‘Der Verlag Peters hat diese [1919] Straubesche Ausgabe mit ausdrücklicher Zustimmung Regers gedruckt und veröffentlicht’). However, it seems that several key writers on Reger’s organ music muddled the issue – see, for example, Wunderlich A, where it is obvious that Heinz Wunderlich thinks that the 1919 edition was published during the composer’s lifetime. The fact that at least a dozen of the movements later to be edited by Straube were given single performances by him between spring 1906 and summer 1907 (see Appendix 3) may indicate that Straube was indeed planning his 1919 Reger edition at this point, a decade before Reger’s death.

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